

EARLY HEAD START TIP SHEET

No. 13

EHS Staff Development, November 2003

How does an Early Head Start program establish an effective system for infant toddler staff development?

Response:

The response to this question is in two parts. The first is infant and toddler specific. The second is concerned with general staff development considerations. These two responses, when combined, address effective infant and toddler staff development opportunities.

- **Infant and Toddler Considerations.** The years of birth to three are times of rapid development and growth unique to this age. There are specific considerations for staff development experiences designed to further knowledge and skills for those providing services to infants, toddlers, pregnant women, and families. These considerations are based on the vulnerability and resiliency of infants and toddlers in addition to the developmental tasks of trust and autonomy formation. Building relationships is a unique process that takes time and support in the formation of trusting, meaningful relationships.

Staff development opportunities for Early Head Start (EHS) programs need to take into consideration the unique characteristics of infants and toddlers. If staff development experiences continually address issues related to birth to five years of age, they may compromise and dismiss the unique developmental concerns of infants and toddlers. See the **Considerations** section for questions to raise as programs implement Head Start Program Performance Standards, develop training plans, and seek to incorporate best practice and highest quality into their Early Head Start services.

- **General Considerations.** Two critical considerations to effective staff development are the purpose and approach, or the content and process. The purpose of staff development opportunities is to increase the knowledge and skill of staff to provide high quality services. To be most meaningful, the content of staff development must build on previous learning and connect to professional development plans, strategic goals, and overall philosophy. The approach or strategies (mentoring, small group discussion, role play, lecture, etc.) to staff development influences the extent of change in staff knowledge and skills. To deliver the most effective staff development, the presenter needs to understand and incorporate adult education and learning principles into the staff development experiences.

Questions to Consider for Planning and Programming:

Infant and Toddler Issues

- How does the program train staff on infant/toddler development in general? How are staff prepared to respond to the unique needs of the different stages of infancy: young infants, mobile infants, and toddlers?
- How does the program train staff on screening, assessment, evaluation & follow-up for infants and toddlers?
- How does the program train staff on curriculum and individualization issues?
- How does the program train staff on observation skills?
- How does the program train staff on health needs specific to infants and toddlers?

- What staff and parent training opportunities exist on issues related to infant/toddler nutrition and feeding practices?
- How does the program train for and support the work with infants and toddlers with special needs? How does this occur in general and for specific children and families within the program?
- How does the program train staff on continuity of care and transitions-within-daily-routine issues?
- How does the program prepare staff to plan and support transitions of children and families into and out of EHS services?
- How does the program plan and schedule staff development events while maintaining continuity of care and a full day/full year program?
- How does the program train staff on mental health issues, in general and specific to infant/toddlers and families?
- How does the program understand and promote the formation of relationships that meet the social-emotional needs of infants and toddlers?
- How does the program provide training and support for the promotion and formation of parent-staff relationships? How are staff prepared for and supported to respond to the unique needs of parents?
- How does the program provide additional support or training for parenting needs specific to their program i.e. teen parents, incarcerated parents, foster care, or grandparent care?
- How does the program train for and support the work with pregnant women and expectant families?
- What procedures and practices does the grantee have in place to ensure hygienic and sanitary routines, for example during meals or diaper/bathroom times or sterilizing toys and materials, etc?
- What staff and parent training opportunities exist on issues related to safety (SIDS, Shaken Baby Syndrome, etc.)?
- What staff and parent training opportunities exist on infant/toddler dental needs and/or issues (swabbing gums, use of pacifiers, prevention of oral decay such as bottle mouth, etc)?

General Considerations (From Developing a Head Start Training Plan)

How does the staff development opportunity:

- Build on prior staff development?
- Address diverse learning needs?
- Build on staff strengths?
- Connect to short and long range planning goals?
- Spend staff development funds effectively?
- Linked to college credit as appropriate?

Performance Standards, Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations:

- 1304.52(k)(1)–(3)
 - (1) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide an orientation to all new staff, consultants, and volunteers that includes, at a minimum, the goals and underlying philosophy of Early Head Start and/or Head Start and the ways in which they are implemented by the program.
 - (2) Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and implement a structured approach to staff training and development, attaching academic credit whenever possible. This system should be designed to help build relationships among staff and to assist staff in acquiring

or increasing the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill their job responsibilities, in accordance with the requirements of 45 CFR 1306. 23.

(3) At a minimum, this system must include ongoing opportunities for staff to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the content of the Head Start Performance Standards.

- 1306.23(a)-(b) Training

(a) Head Start grantees must provide pre-service training and in-service training opportunities to program staff and volunteers to assist them in acquiring or increasing the knowledge and skills they need to fulfill their job responsibilities. This training must be directed toward improving the ability of staff and volunteers to deliver services required by Head Start regulations and policies.

(b) Head Start grantees must provide staff with information and training about the underlying philosophy and goals of Head Start and the program options being implemented.

Resources:

Developing a Head Start Training Plan. DHHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. 1994.

Head Start Bulletin, 72: Professional Development. DHHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. (2002).

Early Head Start National Resource Center. **Early Head Start Program Strategies: Staff Development.** DHHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. 1999.

Program Instruction, ACYF-PI-HS-99-03: Quality Improvement Funds to Increase the Number of Teacher with College Degrees. DHHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. 1999.

Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community. DHHS/ACF/OHS. 2007.

Zero To Three Journal, 15(3): Educating and Supporting the Infant/Family Work Force: Models, Methods, and Materials. (December 1994/January 1995).

Zero To Three Journal, 19(6): The Quest for Quality in Infant/Toddler Child Care. (June/July 1999).

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This Tip Sheet is not a regulatory document. Its intent is to provide a basis for dialogue, clarification, and problem solving among Office of Head Start, Regional Offices, TA consultants, and grantees. If you need further clarification on Head Start Policies and regulations, please contact your Regional Program Specialist.